

Application to Host the Americas Competitiveness Exchange for years 2020, 2021, and 2022

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APPLICATION TO HOST THE AMERICAS COMPETITIVENESS EXCHANGE (ACE)

▶ 1. ABOUT ACE

The Americas Competitiveness Exchange (ACE) is the premier economic development, innovation, and entrepreneurial network of the Americas and is one of the leading High–Level events of the Organization of American States (OAS). The ACE program is one of the core initiatives of the Inter-American Competitiveness Network (RIAC)¹, for which the OAS serves as the Technical Secretariat.

The ACE brings together up to 50 senior-level government, business, policy, and economic decision-makers from across the Americas and beyond to experience first-hand the diverse range of projects, strategic investments, public-private partnerships, and best practices from a particular region’s economic, innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem. These top global leaders are selected to participate in the week-long program to engage with innovation hubs, advanced technology centers, leading firms, educational and research institutions; explore local, regional, urban, and rural economic development models; share experiences and knowledge; build networks to enhance competitiveness in the Americas; promote sustainable and inclusive economic development; and increase trade and investment opportunities.

¹ <http://www.riacnet.org/>

To date, the ACE has been held twelve times since 2014 in the United States, Mexico, Argentina, Canada, Germany, and Israel.

In the United States, the program has been hosted in Atlanta, Georgia, and North & South Carolina in April 2014; Minneapolis, Minnesota-Central, Wisconsin & Chicago, Illinois in April 2015; Arizona & Southern California in April 2016; Central Texas in April 2017; North-Central Florida in December 2017; Central California in October 2018; and Puerto Rico in May 2019. Mexico (Aguascalientes, Guadalajara, and Mexico City) hosted in August 2014; Cordoba, Argentina in October 2015; Ontario, Canada in September 2016; a special edition jointly hosted by Germany and Israel took place in June 2018; and in Santiago de Chile, Chile in October 2019.

ACE 13 will take place in Colorado, the United States, in May 2020. ACE 15, ACE 17, and ACE 19 will be targeted to host communities in the United States while ACE 14, ACE 16, and ACE 20 will be open to host for other countries of the Americas and beyond. ACE events outside of the Americas will be considered for approval by the ACE Committee on a case-by-case basis.

▶ 2. INSTITUTIONS:

ACE is convened in the context of the RIAC by its Chair Pro Tempore (revolving every two years); the Government of the United States, through the U.S. Department of Commerce² [the Economic Development Administration (EDA)³ in coordination with the International Trade Administration (ITA)⁴] and the U.S. Department of State;⁵ and the General Secretariat of the OAS as the RIAC Technical Secretariat.⁶ These institutions constitute the standing ACE

² Under the MOC between the U.S. Department of Commerce and the OAS dated April 2016, the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) formally represents and leads the U.S. Government for the process of coordinating all activities to support ACE programs hosted in the United States.

³ <https://www.eda.gov/>

⁴ <https://www.trade.gov/>

⁵ <http://www.state.gov/>

⁶ http://www.oas.org/en/about/general_secretariat.asp

Coordinating Committee for programs hosted in the United States.⁷ For ACE events held outside the United States, the ACE Coordinating Committee is adjusted to include representatives from the ACE Host Country (the coordinating team and a representative from the Permanent Mission of the host country to the OAS).⁸ This document serves as a Guide for the ACE program. The ACE Committee reserves the right to update and revise the document and its implementation as necessary.

▶ 3. RIAC STRUCTURE

The Inter-American Competitiveness Network (RIAC)⁹ is a regional platform that brings together High-Level Authorities and other key stakeholders leading the Competitiveness, Innovation, and Economic Development agendas of the 34 Member States of the Organization of American States (OAS). The RIAC promotes policy dialogue, exchange of experiences and collaborative initiatives among decision-makers from the public, private, and academic sectors to foster inclusive and sustainable economic development in the Americas. In the context of RIAC, the OAS convenes the Americas Competitiveness Forum (ACF), the Americas Competitiveness Exchange (ACE), and the Group of Experts on Subnational Competitiveness (GTECS).

The Americas Competitiveness Forum (ACF) is a hemispheric policy space for Ministers, government, and business leaders to discuss economic competitiveness and promote innovation in the Americas. It seeks to find joint solutions to common challenges and help foster greater economic competitiveness in the region. During the Forum, actors find multiple occasions to interact, share experiences, and forge greater collaboration. The ACF features keynote speakers, plenaries, bilateral meetings, and networking events. It is an opportunity to find and promote business and develop new commercial relations in the Americas.

⁷The Permanent Standing ACE Committee consists of the U.S. Department of Commerce, the U.S. Department of State, and the Organization of American States. The country holding the RIAC Chair is also part of the Committee.

⁸ For ACE events hosted in the United States, the Chair of the ACE Committee is EDA. For ACE events hosted outside the United States, the Chair of the ACE Committee is the Organization of American States.

⁹ ITA engages with governments, private sector, and other stakeholders in the Western Hemisphere through the Americas Competitiveness Forum (ACF) and serves as U.S. lead in the InterAmerican Competitiveness Network (RIAC).

The Group of Experts on Sub-National Competitiveness (GTECS) meets once a year to discuss, define and recommend strategies to enhance the efforts of regions and localities to become more competitive through the exchange of experiences with other sub-regions, countries, and institutions from the Americas and beyond. In the context of GTECS, as a regional community of practice, experts, government representatives, academic and private sector of OAS member states, share experiences on regional innovation and competitiveness indicators, strategies to improve the business climate, methodologies to benchmark competitiveness, insights to develop local and regional competitiveness agendas, projects to map and support clusters, and incentives to build smart specialization.

► 4. OBJECTIVES:

- Promoting long-term multilateral commercial, trade, and investment partnerships among decision-makers of the Americas and beyond;
- Identifying and sharing best practices in economic development, including public-private partnerships, building local assets that grow businesses, cluster development, promoting entrepreneurship and coordinating regional economic development strategies;
- Stimulating capital investment and job creation in the region;
- Fostering an environment for innovative companies to startup and expand;
- Bringing together universities, industries, and governments to solve complex challenges no one sector, or business could address on its own;
- Facilitating commerce and trade;
- Promoting economic resiliency; and,
- Enhancing opportunities for underrepresented populations.

▶ 5. DEFINITIONS:

Host Country: Country offering and confirmed to host a future edition of the ACE program in one of its regions and communities. The official letter (expression of interest to host and proposed itinerary) should be submitted through official diplomatic channels via the corresponding Permanent Mission of the country to the Organization of American States. For example, through the Permanent Missions of the United States, Chile, Canada, or Spain (for OAS Member States and Permanent Observers).

Local Host Organizers: Group of institutions (public, private, universities, etc.) coordinating the planning and implementation of the ACE program in their community. This includes a lead institution and other partners who work with the ACE Committee on all the necessary arrangements for the ACE program. For example, for ACE 5, the host organizers were the Arizona Commerce Authority, the Imperial Valley Economic Development District, and the San Diego Chamber of Commerce. For ACE 4, the host organizer was the Government of the Province of Cordoba, Argentina.

Host Region: A region or multiple regions in a state or states (cities, provinces, departments) of the host country where the ACE will be held. For example, Ontario, Canada; Puerto Rico, United States; Cordoba, Argentina, etc.

Host City: A city where ACE events are going to stop for visits. For example, Mexico City (Mexico), San Juan (Puerto Rico, United States).

Host Community: A smaller part of the host region or town.

Event Site: The physical location where an ACE event will be held within a city. For example, The University of Arizona Wildcat Stadium, Tempe, Arizona, United States or the Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Event Sponsor: An institution that supports the ACE activity held at an Event Site. The Event Sponsor can be the same institution as the Event Site. For example, the University of Arizona is the Event Sponsor of the ACE visit to the University of Arizona Wildcat Stadium.

▶ 6. MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS TO HOST AN ACE:

Countries and regions interested in hosting an ACE event should present a written proposal and preliminary itinerary for consideration by the ACE Coordinating Committee. Due to the diverse languages of OAS, all applications and documents submitted to the OAS for formal review should be submitted in English and the language of the host country. ACE proposals should focus on highlighting the following criteria:

- The Local Host organizers are led by “gatekeepers” for the region or country –people who have the authority to allocate and direct the necessary resources to host and formally request the organization of an ACE event.¹⁰
- The proposed event sites include economic regions of a country (or countries¹¹) with enough economic and commercial drivers that can act as a single region or economic unit (economic regionalism) for the ACE program to enable close and meaningful collaboration with potential partners.
- Demonstrated market fit with the Americas.¹²
- Regional cooperation is shown through a consortium of public, private, and academic partners and the strength of their partnerships.
- Urban and rural economic assets with the capacity to develop commercial networks with the Americas through trade, FDI, or partnerships.

¹⁰ Regions in the United States should coordinate with the U.S. Department of Commerce while regions in other countries should coordinate with their Permanent Mission to the OAS

¹¹ Some countries may choose to co-host an ACE event, such as Germany and Israel who co-hosted a special edition ACE 9.

¹² This may include, but is not limited to, highlighting existing trade between the region and the Americas or identifying institutions and organizations with a demonstrated interest in developing partnerships and/or increasing trade with the Americas.

- A combination of financial support and economic and cultural assets is available to engage the ACE delegation to drive regional development.
- The host region must have access to an International Airport (s) (as designated by the International Air Transport Association or the International Civil Aviation Organization). The Airport should have the capacity to handle international connections and custom processing for high-level international delegations.
- Host countries must be OAS Member States;
- OAS Permanent Observer Countries can also serve as ACE hosts, on a case-by-case basis, to showcase their economic development models, innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystems and build global partnerships with the stakeholders in the Americas;
- There is sufficient national or regional level budget allocation to host and support the design, planning, and execution of the ACE program.

Two types of financial contributions are needed to be able to host an ACE program: A) a voluntary financial contribution to the OAS to support preparation, execution and follow-up of the ACE Program; and B) resources to cover local costs to ensure successful implementation of the ACE program in their communities. These are further described below:

A) Voluntary financial contribution to the OAS to support preparation, execution, and follow-up of the ACE Program;

- For ACE events held outside the United States:

The ACE Committee encourages countries to apply to host an ACE regardless of their size or level of development. The ACE Committee will work with host countries to maintain the standards and requirements of the ACE brand while recognizing financial, logistical, or other special considerations of a country/region.

For ACE events held outside the United States, the voluntary financial contribution to the OAS will be negotiated with each host country/region in a case-by-case basis. The amount can be reduced in coordination with the Host Country and considering special considerations. Some options to reduce the financial contribution may include:

- Shortening a traditional week-long ACE to a 3 to 4-day ACE due to budget, logistical or other reasons;
- Providing support to the OAS and other ACE key stakeholders with travel and other expenses directly in the host country;
- Considering a program with only one or two communities to facilitate logistical issues and reduce costs.

A minimum level of support is required, however, for the ACE Committee to approve the selection of any ACE program, and for the OAS team to be able to support the delivery of the program on the ground. The minimum requirements will ensure the preservation of the ACE standards and methodologies. Among the minimum requirements to be considered are:

- Support for travel and lodging costs for at least 2-3 RIAC officials/staff to support the execution of the program;
 - Support with the printing of at least 70 copies of the trip book/travel book;
 - Professional video and photography services to document the ACE program, good practices presented, testimonials and opportunities of collaboration identified.
- For ACE events held in the United States:¹³

The U.S. Department of Commerce and the U.S. Department of State, as established members of the ACE Committee, provide the OAS with an

¹³ ACE events in the United States are generally Sunday – Friday with Sunday being a travel day to adjust for the long flights in. ACE events in other countries shall range from 4 to 8 days depending on factors such as cost, logistics, size of the county, etc.

estimated allocation of US \$200,000 per ACE,¹⁴ as well as with event-wide and diplomatic support for the planning and implementation of the ACE program in the United States.¹⁵ The amount supplied by the U.S. Government to the RIAC Technical Secretariat covers the following items:

- Designation of a full-time coordinator from the OAS team and minimum of two other part-time authorities/staff to assist with the program and with subsequent follow-up¹⁶;
- Design and production of any materials, including video recording;
- Thematic support and production of documents, including name badges;
- Set-up, launch, and coordination of the Open Call for Applications;
- Logistical coordination and support before, during and after ACE;
- Execution of surveys and ACE consultations to monitor and enhance the results;
- A media campaign and outreach; and
- Partial to full financial support to at least 10-12 participants from smaller economies.

B) Resources to cover local costs to ensure the successful execution of the ACE program in their communities.

- In addition to the voluntary financial contribution that has to be allocated to the OAS for the preparation, execution, and follow-up of the ACE program, host countries/regions/communities should have the financial capacity to cover the necessary local costs to host the ACE program. Some examples include:

14 The amount varies based on location, size of economy, etc. and is subject to negotiation with the OAS RIAC Technical Secretariat. Local costs such as event space, meals, etc. are not included in this estimate and should be coordinated as desired by each host region. This amount can also be in “in kind”. For bids by hosts within the United States, please note that this amount is covered by financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Commerce that will fund U.S. ACE events through 2021.

15 For U.S. ACE events, the national amount is provided by the U.S. Department of Commerce and the U.S. Department of State. The local-level support must be supplied by the local region.

16 For U.S. ACE events, the national coordinator is the U.S. Department of Commerce through the Economic Development Administration.

- Local transportation (bus to transport ACE participants and organizers and at least 1 or 2 cars for emergency and critical logistical support to the program);¹⁷
- Most meals for participants, VIP guests, ACE support staff, and the ACE Committee during official activities of the ACE;¹⁸
- Local marketing;
- Local branding;
- Local event space;
- Local security;¹⁹
- Regional coordination;
- Logistics; and,
- Event space.

Host countries and host regions are also responsible for the:

- Designation of a regional coordinator with the capacity to make timely decisions and to participate in all weekly calls required to prepare the ACE program and to provide support of follow-up efforts after implementation of the program;
- Appointment of at least one or two additional support staff to work on the preparation and execution of the ACE program;
- For ACE events taking place outside of the United States, at least 1 staff member should be appointed to provide support to the OAS during the preparation stages, for example, to support the development of the Trip Book, Information Bulletin, Guides to participants and hosts, scripts for presentations, name badges, certificates, and follow-up efforts after implementation of the program.

¹⁷ For U.S. ACE events, the local transportation and emergency/security vehicles are paid by the Government of the United States.

¹⁸ Lunch and dinners at a minimum. Generally around 66 to 70 people total. Must be provided at U.S. Government per diem rates. In the United States, these costs are the responsibility of the host communities and not the U.S. Government.

¹⁹ The U.S. Government provides national level security assistance to local hosts for ACE events in the United States, but local security is still a local cost.

Host countries and host regions are committed to conducting follow-up after an ACE. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Dedication of staff to conduct monitoring in coordination with the OAS RIAC Technical Secretariat;
- Host countries and regions shall remain in good standing with the ACE Coordinating Committee; and,
- A commitment to participate in post-event surveys and metrics exercises as determined and implemented by OAS to evaluate the continued success of the program.

As relevant, host countries and host regions can participate in the Americas Competitiveness Forum (ACF).²⁰ By organizing an ACE, host communities are eligible to receive a special invitation to bring delegations from their region to the ACF to engage with high-level business and government leaders of the Americas as well as to meet with other ACE Alumni to continue post-ACE follow-up. The ACE Coordinating Committee can facilitate meetings and activities for ACE host communities. The ACE Committee can consider special ACE missions or ACE technical visits under the ACE program umbrella to boost impact and results, reengage with ACE prior hosts, and accelerate collaboration and cooperation opportunities among the ACE Network (participants and hosts).

Projects, sites, and presentations should focus on the following;

- Innovation and Entrepreneurship;
- Recovery & Resilience;
- Critical Infrastructure;
- Workforce Development & Manufacturing;
- Trade and FDI;
- Urban and Rural Development;

²⁰ The ACF is the Meeting of Ministers, High-Level Authorities and Competitiveness Councils convened every 18 months to two years by the OAS to discuss ways to improve the competitiveness of the region in the context of the Inter-American Competitiveness Network (RIAC).

- Opportunity Zones²¹;
- Business Creation and Development; and
- Integrated Economic Development.²²

▶ 7. PROCESS TO HOST ACE:

ACE is organized twice per year, ideally occurring in two different countries. The ACE Coordinating Committee retains the discretion to select the same country for ACE events within the same year, depending on official bids received.

THERE ARE FOUR STEPS REQUIRED TO HOST, PLAN, AND EXECUTE AN ACE PROGRAM:

1. **Expression of Interest/Letter of Intent:** Interested ACE hosts must submit a Letter of Intent for consideration by the ACE Coordinating Committee no more than three years in advance of the proposed ACE.
2. **Full Proposal:** If invited by the ACE Coordinating Committee, the interested ACE hosts must submit a detailed proposal at least nine months before a proposed ACE.
3. **Selection and Announcement:** The formal selection of ACE hosts will be made in writing and is announced at the preceding ACE event or the preceding ACF.
4. **Finalize Agenda and Itinerary of ACE:** Once planning begins, the ACE Coordinating Committee will provide guidance and assistance to the ACE host starting 6 to 8 months in advance of the ACE program. This guidance is mandatory and helps to maintain branding, appropriate security measures, and scope.

Each of the four steps are described in further detail below.

STEP 1: Expression of Interest (EOI)/Letter of Intent (LOI) – An expression of interest in the form of a letter should be sent to the ACE Coordinating Committee. The EOI/LOI should

²¹ This applies only to events in the United States. Opportunity Zones are defined in The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, Publ. L. No 115-97 (2017).

²² EDA defines this as locally-identified priorities for regional economic diversification, growth and prosperity by increasing access to opportunity, facilitating enhanced collaboration, and reducing administrative burdens. <https://www.eda.gov/edi/index.htm>.



describe the proposed program, key partners, region, and possible dates. This letter can also ask for consultations, advice, and technical assistance from the ACE Coordinating Committee in helping craft the full proposal. The EOIs/LOIs will also serve as the basis for a technical review. Potential ACE hosts should describe how their ACE proposal is responsive to the ACE guidelines and reflective of the essential criteria necessary to host an ACE.

The ACE Coordinating Committee will review the EOI/LOI within 30 working days and determine if it meets the ACE program objectives (see Section 3) and reflects the essential criteria (see Section 4) necessary for further competitive consideration. For those EOI/LOIs deemed by the ACE Coordinating Committee to meet the ACE program objectives and the essential criteria, the submitting party will be asked to work with the ACE Coordinating Committee to submit a full application for competitive consideration.

If a bidding group has not engaged in a RIAC related event as a participant or previous host, the ACE Coordinating Committee may recommend such involvement before submission of a letter of intent and a final proposal.

EOIs/LOIs shall be considered starting up to three years in advance of the proposed ACE dates. The ACE Coordinating Committee will accept applications at any point and will work closely with applicants to provide prompt feedback and responses on funding decisions. No EOI/LOI shall be considered within nine months before the tentative start dates of a proposed ACE.

STEP 2: Full Proposal – The preparation of this proposal is by invitation, and only after the EOI/LOI has been reviewed and accepted for further consideration by the ACE Coordinating Committee. The full proposal shall include a detailed draft agenda, key and committed event sites and speakers, main organizers, and other items that demonstrate the region’s ability to comply with the minimum requirements to host ACE as well as any value-added to be considered by the RIAC/ACE Coordinating Committee. See the attached template for additional information.

Full proposals shall be submitted to the ACE Coordinating Committee at least nine months before the tentative dates of a proposed ACE. For ACEs held outside the United States, the official bid must come through official diplomatic channels through a country's representation at the Organization of American States.

Once the full proposal is submitted to the ACE Coordinating Committee, a response with the status will be officially sent to the requested country within two months via official diplomatic channels. The ACE Coordinating Committee reserves the right to request the applicant for refinement of the proposal, more information, or any other items as necessary during deliberations.²³

STEP 3: Selection and Announcement – ACE events shall be officially confirmed via a letter from the OAS. After selection, the next host shall work closely with the ACE Coordinating Committee to develop materials and implement administrative procedures such as updating timelines, executing the ACE participant application process, refining the ACE itinerary, maintaining a list of contacts at each site, designing a logo, developing a communication strategy to include a promotional video and marketing the program via website and social media outlets to support all preparations to host and organize the ACE program. Weekly check-ins are necessary at a minimum to ensure the ACE brand, program, and functions are correctly executed. The ACE will be publically announced after the preceding ACE or preceding ACF.

STEP 4: Agenda and Itinerary of ACE – After ACE hosts are announced, the ACE Host organizers and a representative from the Host country shall be appointed to join the RIAC/ACE Coordinating Committee²⁴. The RIAC/ACE Coordinating Committee shall work with the ACE host organizers and guide key anchor sites, themes, sectors, and clusters to be part of the program as well as recommendations and best practices on diplomatic

²³ The ACE Coordinating Committee reserves the right to share successful full proposals with other countries as examples.

²⁴ This role is filled by the U.S. Department of Commerce for U.S. ACE events.

protocol, logistics, travel times, presenter schedules, and other relevant information. This process shall start six to eight months prior to the date of the ACE program.

▶ 8. PROFILE AND SELECTION OF ACE PARTICIPANTS:

ACE participants shall be decision-makers, including Ministers/Vice Ministers or equivalent, members of Congress/Legislature/Parliament, Presidents/Vice Presidents of Chambers of Industry, CEOs, private sector/industry leaders, Mayors or senior leaders from cities or provinces, Chancellors/Presidents/Vice Presidents of universities, Presidents of Competitiveness and Innovation Councils, top entrepreneurs, and Senior leaders of regional economic development partnership groups, innovation agencies, or other crucial public or private sector individuals.

Participation shall be limited to up to 50 participants from the OAS Member States and, as relevant, OAS Permanent Observer Countries.

If an applicant is the equivalent of a Deputy Minister or higher, s/he receives courtesy acceptance.

- Host countries may include up to 10% of the participants in the ACE program from their own host country, ideally representing different regions. If these posts are not filled, they shall become available for the general pool of applications.
- Participation from OAS Permanent Observer Countries will be evaluated on a limited, case-by-case basis. Host countries can request which OAS Permanent Observer countries they would like to be considered for ACE participation, and the ACE Coordinating Committee shall have the final say regarding their participation. Host countries are encouraged to focus on OAS member countries before identifying observer countries for involvement.
- A maximum of 20% of participant slots can be allocated to ACE hosts from the previous two ACE events. If these spots are not filled, they shall become available for the general pool of applications. Previous ACE host sites shall receive preference for

delegation spots for the subsequent two ACE events after hosting. After two ACE events, their applications shall be considered among the general pool of applicants.

- Prior ACE participants who have shown results and effective implementation of partnerships and collaboration opportunities from previous ACE events will be given preference in their application.
- Gender balance, geographic representation, and the participation of leaders from academia, government, and the private sector, with a particular emphasis on small business development centers and entrepreneurs, is encouraged.

The participants will be recruited and selected via a collaborative process between the host country, the permanent ACE Coordinating Committee, and the current Chair of the RIAC. These parties shall consider the following criteria for the selection of participants, in no particular order:

- Diplomatic rank/diplomatic protocol;
- Public and private sector senior leadership;
- Prior ACE hosts and participants who have shown ACE-related results such as GTECS²⁵ or ACF;
- Diversity: geographical, sectoral, and gender balance;
- Capacity to cover the cost of their participation;
- Ability to create long-term economic connections;
- Top entrepreneurs and innovators;
- Economic development system representatives.

▶ 9. ACE COMMITTEE CONTACT INFORMATION:

For additional information or questions about the ACE program, please contact:

²⁵ The Working Group of Experts on Subnational Competitiveness (GTECS) was created by the RIAC to promote competitiveness in the Western Hemisphere to exchange of experiences on competitiveness and innovation at the provincial, state, sub-regional, and city levels. http://riacnet.org/initiatives/ct_31/en/



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ACE HOST APPLICATION PROPOSAL COVER SHEET

You may reproduce this form on your computer

Date of application: _____ Submitted for ACE host year: _____

Lead Organization Contact Information

Name of the overall coordinating organization		Legal name, if different	
Address		City, State/Province, Zip, Country	
Phone	Facebook and Twitter accounts	Website	
Primary ACE Host Coordinator	Title	Phone	E-mail
Secondary ACE Host Coordinator – (If applicable)	Title	Phone	E-mail

ACE PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

Please give a summary in a maximum of 10 pages showcasing your region and why it should host an ACE. This summary should include the following items²⁶:

²⁶ A proposal to bid is not a guarantee of selection. All full proposals will be given full and fair consideration.



- **Economic Background:** An overview of the economic conditions, key clusters²⁷ (using the U.S.²⁸ or European Union²⁹ definition for clusters), history, and culture of the region;
- **SWOT Analysis:** An in-depth analysis of regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (commonly known as a “SWOT” analysis) relating to your region's economy;
- **Strategic Direction/Action Plan**³⁰: The strategic direction and action plan should build on findings from the SWOT analysis and incorporate/integrate elements from other regional programs (e.g., land use and transportation, workforce development, etc.). In particular, this plan should show how the ACE could benefit your region, as well as how your region could benefit the participants;
- **Outline of prior engagement with OAS member countries**, including results from ACE/ACF participation;
- **Market fit:** Demonstrate that your region is positioned for increased trade and economic development interactions with the Americas. This may include, but is not limited to, highlighting any existing trade and other partnerships³¹ between your region and the Americas or identify institutions and organizations (who have agreed to be ACE site hosts) with interest in developing economic development partnerships and increasing trade with the Americas;
- **Key ACE host partners and their host responsibilities;**
- **Airport information;**
- **Urban and crucial rural anchor sites**³²; and
- **Hotel information** – up to 60 rooms at the U.S. Government per diem rate (numbers may vary in ACE events hosted outside of the United States).³³

The following attachments are also required:

²⁷ The Mexican and Canadian maps already use the U.S. definition.

²⁸ <http://clustermapping.us/content/cluster-mapping-methodology>

²⁹ <http://www.clusterobservatory.eu/index.html>

³⁰ The host committee recommends that regions have a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy or similar document based on the model used by EDA. <https://www.eda.gov/ceds/> or <https://www.cedscentral.com/>.

³¹ Research, innovation, technology transfer and other partnerships.

³² An anchor site is defined as a primary site that can be used to draw high level participation to the event. For example, MARS Discovery District in Toronto, top tier universities, major cultural or historical economic drivers, etc.

³³ For CONUS <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates> and OCONUS https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp.

- **Full proposed agenda** with anchor site participation confirmed;
- **Cover submission letter** from a central gatekeeper to accompany application packet;
- **Letters of support** from consortium members and critical regional leaders;
- **Statement of availability of funds** to host and support the design, planning, and implementation of the ACE program.

For applications hosted outside of the United States: bids must be coordinated by the Organization of the American States as the RIAC Technical Secretariat before being submitted to the ACE Coordinating Committee.

For applications hosted in the United States: bids must be coordinated and submitted by representatives of the U.S. Department of Commerce³⁴ and the U.S. Permanent Mission to the Organization of American States of the U.S. Department of State.

³⁴ As outlined by the Memorandum of Cooperation between the U.S. Department of Commerce and the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States Concerning Competitiveness, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship in the Americas dated 14 April 2016.